

## Minutes

TO: Human Services Committee

FROM: Judy Casperson, Chairperson

DATE: August 6, 2013

SUBJECT: Human Services Committee Meeting

**In Attendance: Judy Casperson, Shari Cantor, Burke Doar, Ron Van Winkle, Pat Holloway, Pat Alair, Helen Rubino-Turco, Marcia Lewis**

The Human Services Committee met on Tuesday, August 6, 2013, at 8:00 a.m., in Town Hall, Room 312 to discuss the following:

## AGENDA

1. Faxon Library – Community Outreach  
**The Committee discussed a Community Needs Assessment being conducted at Faxon Library with the assistance of a Connecticut Trust Grant. The executive summary of the study is attached. A series of recommendations will be forthcoming from participants.**
2. Bishops Corner Library – Completion  
**The work at Bishops Corner Library is substantially complete. With the solar and energy conservation investments the library and senior center have seen a substantial reduction in energy use.**
3. Ordinance updating Human Rights Commission Ordinance  
**A revision updating the language of the ordinances creating the Human Relations Committee will be introduced at the next Council meeting. The change updates the language setting up the committee with more modern terms.**
4. Hooker House  
**Working with Chris Dobbs at the Noah Webster House and a grant from the Connecticut Trust for Historic Preservation a capital needs assessment of the Hooker House was conducted. Approximately \$200,000 of improvements were identified for the purpose of preserving the structure of the building. Additional grants may be sought for these improvements.**
5. Farm to Table date  
**The Human and Leisure Services Department will be holding a farm to table dinner at Westmoor Park on October 4<sup>th</sup>.**
6. Resident contributions  
**The Bishops Corner Senior Center received a donations from the Reisner Family in memory of their mother Frieda. The funds will be used to construct a patio on the east side of the building.**

**The Stanley Frank Family has also made a contribution to the Elmwood Community Center in the amount of \$10,000.**

7. CDBG Funding for accessibility improvements in the parks  
**There is a plan to allocate a portion of the CDBG funds for accessibility improvements at the town's parks. The Council will see a resolution for this purpose at a September council meeting.**
8. Library parking  
**The staff is conducting a review of library parking at the Noah Webster Library. The present validation system is cumbersome and results in a significant number of non-library patrons getting validations.**
9. Beachland Park – St. Brigid School Agreement  
**A draft agreement with St. Brigid School would result in patrons of the park being able to use the school parking while allowing better access for the school access to the park facilities.**
10. Other business  
**No other business was discussed.**

**THE NEXT MEETING IS SET FOR SEPTEMBER 16<sup>TH</sup> AT 8:00 AM.**

C: Town Council  
Ronald Van Winkle, Town Manager  
Joseph O'Brien, Corporation Counsel  
Essie Labrot, Town Clerk  
Department Directors  
Karen List, Superintendent of Public Schools

# COMMUNITY NEEDS ASSESSMENT FOR WEST HARTFORD'S TOP 7 LANGUAGE GROUPS

An IMLS Grant Coordinated by the Faxon Library

## Executive Summary

**Process:** Representatives from the West Hartford's Top 7 Language Groups (Spanish, Portuguese, Chinese, Vietnamese, Russian, Urdu and Nepalese) were hired as Language Leaders. After coordinated training, each Language Leader led a focus group exploring that group's experiences, identifying needs, and making recommendations for improving life here.

### We Learned That:

- People want to be engaged in West Hartford, but need more information provided in their language about issues of importance in their lives: jobs, voting, safety, education, health.
- A language barrier may be an obstacle to
  - obtaining information as well as to participating in activities,
  - a sense of understanding and of being understood, and
  - a sense of belonging and feeling welcome within the town
  - to active civic engagement.
- Each language group has unique factors such as differences in the geography of their country of origin, religion, language and cultural variations.
- The key concerns of these groups - taxes, education, jobs, generation gap – may also rank among the top concerns of the community as a whole.
- The **Composite Outline** will serve as a working document for meeting those needs and includes both the Specific Needs and a range of possible solution strategies in the following general categories:

Communication Needs--including two-way communication

Government-Related Needs--increasing both understanding and participation

Town Service Needs--including the full range of services for all ages

Safety Needs--especially understanding about police and emergency situations

Educational Needs--including Adult Ed, preschool, and parental involvement

Employment Needs--including assistance with finding employment

Health Needs--such as accessing affordable health care

Community Space Needs--including providing accessible space for groups

Transportation Needs-- improved public transportation

Collaboration/Engagement Needs--including increased participation in all town activities

**Participants:** ADVISORY BOARD & LANGUAGE LEADERS are listed in the Composite Outline. Over 80 volunteers signed "JOIN US" forms to identify their interests in participating in future activities: planning programs, sharing their culture, children & families, etc.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

### 1. Create a Multilingual Advisory Board

Develop an informal, welcoming, action-oriented group to engage the multilingual community in ongoing improvements and to address the range of needs mentioned above. To turn this listening exercise into a participatory and problem-solving opportunity for active engagement. Immediate steps in this process could be:

- Invite participation from the CNA grant advisory group and from people who signed a "Join Us" form to create a volunteer leadership team
- Work in conjunction with "**Town Services Liaisons**" as outlined below
- Share this opportunity with language groups and through press release .
- Identify and engage potential partners such as:
  - Hartford Immigrant Advisory Board
  - Hello West Hartford
  - Duffy Fifth-Grade WELCOME group
  - Faith-based groups
  - Press and media links (La Voz, television, etc.)
  - Businesses (both those owned by immigrants and those serving them)
- OVERALL PURPOSE::
  - to provide an ongoing mechanism for addressing the needs mentioned in the **COMPOSITE OUTLINE** attached.
  - to develop opportunities for ongoing engagement .

### 2. Create a Parallel Town Services Support Team

**\* Participants would be identified as "liaisons" connected with specific needs to as identified on the COMPOSITE OUTLINE.** Including all related town services such as Adult Education, Library, Senior Services, Human Services, Fire, Police.

Research "best practices" models for multilingual municipal services and websites in order to ensure "welcoming" aspect to sites, find links to information about organizations, press, businesses, language-learning opportunities (both English and other languages).

#### **\*Create Multilingual Technical Team**

To explore and recommend technical solutions to problems listed above--such as social networking solutions, possible blog, link with non-English press contacts, adjustments to webpages (both Schools, Town, Libraries), explore best translator solutions, apps, etc. Preliminary recommendations for participation:

Jared Morin,  
Pramod Pradhan (Nepalese-speaking WH resident and IT Employee of both Hartford and West Hartford Public Libraries)  
Syed Saqlain (Urdu-speaking member of CNA Advisory Group and recent graduate with Tech Degree)